United Nations A/53/PV.29

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-third Session

29th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 6 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Festus Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Botswana.

Mr. Festus Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Botswana, His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mogae: Mr. President, allow me at the outset to express great pleasure at seeing you preside over the work of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We are confident that under your able leadership the work of this session will be an unmitigated success. I can assure you of the cooperation and support of my country's delegation throughout your stewardship of this session.

Allow me also to pay a well-deserved tribute to our indefatigable Secretary-General and his staff for the efforts they are making, often under very trying conditions, to give meaning and concrete expression to the lofty ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. They deserve the full support and cooperation of all Member States and their peoples.

As we approach the next millennium, we are fully conscious of the omnipresence of war and of the havoc it continues to wreak upon peoples in literally every continent of the world. It is true that local wars have so far not posed a serious threat to international peace and security, but by some accounts they have already killed and maimed more people than both world wars combined. And judging by the number of those who are killed in them and other attendant consequences, these wars, whatever their cause, are a living reality for those who fight in them and for the innocent people who are caught in the cross-fire. The conclusion we can draw is that not all succeeding generations of humankind have been spared the scourge of war in accordance with the promise made over 50 years ago by the founding fathers of this Organization. In terms of human history, 50 years is a relatively short time. It is, however, long enough to make the judgement that present-day human beings, like their predecessors in history, have failed to unlearn the ways of war — or rather to acquire the skills to live with one another like good neighbours.

The presence of war and conflict among and within nations has often drawn a great deal of criticism to the United Nations, as if it had a magic wand to resolve every problem brought to its doorstep. True, there is room for improvement in the performance and efficacy of the United Nations. Certainly, the genocide in Rwanda

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in 1994 could have been avoided with more determination and foresight.

Unfortunately, in awarding themselves certain extraordinary powers, the framers of the Charter built certain imperfections into the Organization which have proven to be serious encumbrances to its efficiency and effectiveness on conflict resolution. So long as this Organization remains the creation of the nation-State system with its in-built self-interest, it cannot be expected to perform differently. But we can certainly improve its delivery system to acceptable levels. Notwithstanding the imperfections of the United Nations, its continued existence is in the national interest of all Member States, whatever their claims to the contrary. Otherwise, Member States which felt they benefitted the least would long since have withdrawn their membership. Member States should therefore commit themselves to the payment of their contributions to the budget of the United Nations when they fall due, without any conditions.

Ideally, the United Nations should have developed machinery to address and avert conflict situations before they actually occur. However, in the world in which we live, the ideal and the real do not often dovetail. Preventive diplomacy should quickly be succeeded by robust peacekeeping as soon as it is determined that a conflict situation is not amenable to resolution through dialogue. Preventive deployment has been put to use successfully in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and the separation of belligerent forces has also been put to successful use to contain the otherwise explosive situations in Cyprus and Lebanon.

The African experience in peacekeeping has been slightly different. In most cases, conflicts have smouldered and festered to calamitous proportions on our continent as a result of international inertia — or should we call it "Africa fatigue"? Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Great Lakes region and other cases are illustrative in this regard. African States are ready and willing to bear their fair share of peacekeeping operations on the continent, but they are certainly lacking in logistic and financial wherewithal. While there is ample scope for improvement in African peacekeeping capacity, Africa has over the years acquired practical experience both in the field and through cooperation with other countries. Thus, Africa has a relatively sophisticated capacity to carry out peacekeeping responsibilities.

I must admit that it hurts my pride as an African to hear that African conflict situations dominate the agenda of the Security Council. This is a dubious honour, if indeed it is an honour at all. It must, however, be acknowledged that African problems are problems of the international community. They are problems of the United Nations, whose Charter is categorical in allocating primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. That responsibility was bestowed in trust. It cannot be shirked for political expediency in any part of the world. African conflicts deserve equal attention by this Organization, to which all African States belong and pay their dues, however modest. They cannot be left to the Africans alone to resolve.

If I have devoted a great part of my address to the role of the United Nations in crisis management and in the defusing of tensions, it is not because I am oblivious to other equally pressing issues of our times. Crises and tensions, by their very nature, presuppose a lack of security, movement of people and, very often, deep-rooted intolerance. Evidently, when people raise swords against their neighbours, the humanness that is innate in all people is replaced by the bestiality that lies latent in every person. It is incomprehensible how the perpetrators of acts of genocide and other serious crimes against humanity manage to live with their consciences or to lead normal lives after such heinous criminal activities.

The establishment last summer of the International Criminal Court will, we hope, help to ensure that perpetrators of acts of genocide, crimes against humanity and other inhuman acts will not go unpunished. The International Criminal Court will also, we hope, act as a deterrent for those intending to commit such serious crimes. The conviction by the Rwanda Tribunal of two leading personalities involved in acts of genocide in Rwanda in 1994 has also served notice to would-be perpetrators of similar acts that the international community can no longer tolerate their diabolical acts.

Human rights abuse is equally intolerable and immoral. Institutions dealing with human rights should be empowered to deal with the perpetrators of human rights abuses with the full force of the law. Human rights abuse has been responsible for the bulk of the horrendous conflicts that have ravaged societies in all continents throughout this violent century. We therefore could not agree more with the Secretary-General when he says in his annual report on the work of the Organization,

> "If individual rights are not protected, the whole of society suffers. Personal freedoms are however rendered largely meaningless by civil wars, or by

economic, social or cultural deprivation — often, indeed, by a combination of all these". (*A/53/1, para. 171*)

Therefore, in this, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the community of civilized nations to which we all belong must reaffirm its commitment to the human rights ideals enshrined in the Declaration and to their determination to live up to those ideals.

Globalization and economic liberalization have brought about unprecedented expansion in world trade and commerce, but they have also accentuated the imbalances in international economic relations. The vast majority of countries, particularly in Africa, continue to face marginalization in the world economy. The problem is further compounded by the fact that official development assistance has fallen to unprecedentedly low levels.

In Africa, armed conflicts have impacted negatively on development prospects. Corruption has also been one of the biggest obstacles to development. There is, however, reason for optimism. The majority of African countries have instituted reforms to achieve economic growth and development, including the application of sound macroeconomic policies, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights. They have taken serious measures to introduce budgetary reforms, remove restrictions on current payments and restrain credit and monetary expansion. Over the past few years Africa's economic performance has been on an upward trend. In 1997 close to 60 per cent of the African countries registered growth rates in excess of their population growth rates, and about half of this number posted annual economic growth rates of more than 5 per cent.

Africa, however, still needs active support and assistance from the international community. We clearly recognize that it is the primary responsibility of the Africans themselves to reduce the marginalization of their continent from the world economy. But for Africa to achieve any tangible success and emerge from the conditions of poverty and underdevelopment a new type of partnership with the developed world is required to increase trade and the continent's share of global prosperity. African countries need improved access to world markets, greater flow of foreign direct investment, technology transfer and an increase in official development assistance.

The decline in official development assistance needs to be reversed. Similarly, external debt is a problem requiring urgent attention. In fact, the debt burden continues to be one of the main obstacles to economic growth and development. The new initiative adopted by the Bretton Woods institutions to reduce the multilateral debt of the heavily indebted poor countries is a welcome development, though its implementation has been very disappointing and painfully slow. Botswana believes that the only viable solution to the debt problem faced by the poorest countries is outright cancellation of the debt.

The main objectives of Botswana's development strategy are employment creation and poverty alleviation. Lack of income is the most immediate cause of poverty among our people. Employment opportunities have increased significantly in the last few years, but the rate of unemployment is still unacceptably high. To improve the situation, Botswana has over the past few years undertaken measures to create a favourable environment for investment, including the encouragement of small and medium-scale enterprises. I am confident that with the support of our development partners our efforts will bear fruit.

Before I conclude my statement, let me say a few words about recent events in southern Africa. On 16 September 1998 there was an attempt to put an end to the constitutional order in the Kingdom of Lesotho by overthrowing a democratically elected Government. Junior officers in the Lesotho Defence Force mutinied and arrested their senior officers, including the army commander. Government employees, including Cabinet Ministers, were stopped from going to work, which resulted in a complete collapse of the administrative order in the country. Criminal activity and lawlessness became the order of the day. There was no doubt that Lesotho was on the brink of widespread violence and total chaos.

The crisis was most alarming because of its wider implications for peace and stability in the whole subregion of southern Africa. No effort was made by those involved to heed the calls for peaceful dialogue. Under the circumstances, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) could not remain indifferent. Therefore, on 21 September 1998 members of the Botswana Defence Force and the South African Defence Forces entered the Kingdom of Lesotho in response to an appeal for such intervention by the democratically elected Government of Lesotho. The intervention is aimed at assisting the people of Lesotho to create conditions conducive for them to address their

differences in a peaceful manner. Our action conforms strictly to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the resolution of the 1997 Harare summit of the Organization of African Unity which condemns the overthrow of legitimate Governments by the military.

I wish to assure the Assembly that the military intervention by Botswana and South Africa in Lesotho is motivated solely by a sincere will to establish conditions of peace and security in our sister country. We are dealing with a difficult, complex and rapidly changing situation. As such, our forces shall remain in Lesotho for as long as necessary to restore public order and the rule of law.

With regard to Angola, it has become increasingly clear that the leader of UNITA has no intention that it shall meet its obligations under the Lusaka Protocol. Given the renewed upsurge in violence caused by UNITA, SADC has come to the conclusion, regretfully, that Mr. Savimbi must be held personally responsible for war crimes that his movement has committed, and continues to commit even after it has signed a peace agreement. The people of Angola have suffered for far too long and it is time that this fratricidal war, which has devastated the country, was brought to an end.

Across the border from war-weary Angola, another SADC country is going through a painful process of national rebirth, rudely interrupted two months ago by a rebellion which, even as we meet here, is ineluctably sapping the residual energy of a devastated country. The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo deserve a break. Through the timely assistance rendered by three SADC countries at a time of great peril, it is our fervent hope that the Democratic Republic of the Congo will soon resume its process of rebirth and do so in peace and tranquillity.

Let me conclude by assuring you, Mr. President, and the nations gathered here that Botswana's faith in the United Nations as the universal repository of the hopes and aspirations of all mankind remains as strong as ever. We will continue to work assiduously for the enhancement of the efficacy of the Organization, to help equip it for the arduous tasks that lie ahead.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Botswana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Festus Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 85

Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Commemorative meeting marking the fiftieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping

Draft resolution (A/53/L.5)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The General Assembly will now hold the commemorative meeting marking the fiftieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping operations, in accordance with the decision taken at its 3rd plenary meeting, and pursuant to Assembly resolution 52/69 of 10 December 1997.

I am greatly honoured and deeply satisfied to preside over this ceremony commemorating 50 years of peacekeeping operations.

This is much more than a pro forma exercise. It represents the feeling that inspires us all when we contemplate the important role these operations have played in our quest for international peace and security. Equally important, this occasion should be a time for reflecting on the present and future of this kind of United Nations intervention.

Peacekeeping operations range from monitoring elections to the verification of respect for human rights, as well as measures to re-establish institutions, when necessary, and restore services affected by war, violence and instability.

Hundreds of thousands of troops from many different States have participated in 49 such operations, on every continent, since 1948, and more than a thousand military and civilian personnel — including, in 1961, the Secretary-General of the Organization himself, Dag Hammarskjöld — have lost their lives. All of this proves that there are many special aspects of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary, which is a milestone in the history of the United Nations.

Naturally, a great deal has been said and written about the legal nature and status of peacekeeping

operations, and the doctrinal and political debate continues in the light of the new forms that these operations are assuming.

At first, interposition by military units and civilian observers under the auspices of the Organization, and at the request of the States involved, in order to quell or limit hostile actions, verify compliance with ceasefire agreements or contribute, as an impartial observer, to possible negotiations was accepted as a legitimate implementation of the letter and spirit of Chapter VI of the Charter. This was so even when the use of troops armed with light weapons introduced a modality not unlike the measures provided for in Chapter VII, a situation that inspired Dag Hammarskjöld to say, in a felicitous turn of phrase, that peacekeeping operations came under "Chapter VI and a half" of the Charter.

During the cold war, on the basis of the conceptual framework I have described, a number of peacekeeping operations were established that helped to ward off more than a few conflicts that threatened international peace and security. The universality implicit in the composition of these operations lessened national sensitivities and even limited the concept of State sovereignty, while facilitating dialogue and negotiations between the parties involved.

The end of the bipolar international order created a proliferation of localized armed confrontations of diverse and complex origin, which presented the United Nations with new and difficult challenges. Many internal conflicts, which generally also had international implications, were accompanied by grave threats to human rights and by catastrophic emergency situations. These conflicts occurred at a time when the United Nations was reaffirming its commitment to safeguard these fundamental values.

It was then, at the end of the 1980s — and it is worth noting that in 1988 the United Nations received the Nobel Peace Prize — that the Member States authorized and encouraged the implementation of new forms of peacekeeping operations, later formalized by the Security Council, following the guidelines in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Peace, in 1992. These changes included an emphasis on preventive diplomacy and the deployment of troops before hostilities. Thus, 36 of the 49 peacekeeping operations undertaken by the United Nations were organized between 1989 and 1998. However, these figures do not in themselves illustrate the qualitative element of these operations.

First of all, we saw an extension of the field of application of peacekeeping operations to certain internal conflicts: the parties' consent was no longer essential and the mandates of the operations were considerably broadened to include a number of political, institutional and administrative aspects of the States or parties involved. In general, the golden rule of not opening fire except in self-defence was made more flexible, by force of circumstance, to meet the need to protect displaced and suffering civilian populations or to ensure their survival through the delivery of emergency supplies.

Also noteworthy has been the growing intervention of coalitions, acting with the support of the Security Council, as well as action taken by regional organizations pursuant to the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter.

A number of failures in peacekeeping operations have given rise to criticism. It has been pointed out that there is a need to establish more precise mandates, to define frameworks for action more clearly, and to provide the operations with sufficient means and resources. This premise makes it essential for Member States to meet their financial obligations fully and on time.

On a more general and substantive plane, many countries still have reservations about the growing tendency to have recourse to peacekeeping operations and about the expansion of their mandates. These countries invoke the fundamental principle, enshrined in Article 2, paragraph 7 of the Charter, prohibiting intervention in the internal affairs of States.

The truth, however, is that, beyond the reasonable caution that should govern the administration of peacekeeping operations — which, after 50 years, may be considered an essential institution in the functioning of the United Nations — there is a clear consensus that they should be strengthened as an effective tool for maintaining peace and contributing to the ideal of a world in which human rights are respected and the universal duty of humanitarian assistance prevails.

The Member States whose representatives are gathered here understand that peace and the values I have just mentioned are the very *raison d'être* of the United Nations. On their behalf, it is my duty as President of the General Assembly to recognize the pioneers of the peacekeeping operations and to pay sincere homage to all the participants, many of whom are represented here. I also wish to voice our satisfaction at the excellent work

of the Secretariat in this respect and to pay a heartfelt tribute to the memory of the heroic officials, soldiers and civilians — including some from my country — who paid with their lives because we, the peoples, were determined to achieve a better world based on peace and justice.

These ideas and feelings are, in my opinion, fully reflected in the text of the Declaration. I should like to recommend that it be adopted by acclamation. I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: Today it is my great honour to commemorate with the Assembly the fiftieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping — the fiftieth anniversary of the year when soldiers were sent onto the battlefield under a new flag, with a new mission: a mission of peace.

It would be no exaggeration to say that that mission was without precedent in human history. It was an attempt to confront and defeat the worst in man with the best in man; to counter violence with tolerance, might with moderation and war with peace.

That mission has earned its place in history as the first example of what has come to be known as peacekeeping. Ever since then, day after day, year after year, United Nations peacekeepers have been meeting the threat and reality of conflict, without losing faith, without giving in and without giving up.

Since 1948, there have been 49 United Nations peacekeeping operations. Thirty-six of those have been created since 1988, the year in which United Nations peacekeeping was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Well over 750,000 military and civilian police personnel, and thousands of other civilians, from 118 different countries, have served in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Fourteen thousand peacekeepers are serving this very day.

No figures, however, can do justice to the ultimate sacrifice that more than 1,500 peacekeepers have made over this half-century. Today we pay tribute, above all, to the brave Blue Helmets who gave their lives in the cause of peace. Whatever success we have had is owed to their sacrifice, their dedication and their heroism.

I am grateful and particularly honoured to announce that later today I shall bestow on three of our fallen peacekeepers, in the presence of their families, a new Medal named after one of them: Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld.

The United Nations, forged from the battles of two world wars, was dedicated, above all, to the pursuit of peace and, in the enduring words of the Charter, to saving "succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Undoubtedly, peacekeeping falls fairly and squarely within the spirit of that pledge. Yet you will search in vain in the Charter for any specific provision for such operations.

Peacekeeping, from the start, has been an improvisation. To my mind, that is one of its great merits. It proved, and continues to prove, that the United Nations is not a static or hidebound Organization, but a dynamic and innovative one. Indeed, peacekeeping has been one of many activities through which the United Nations has shown its ability to adapt to circumstances, to find its way around obstacles and to make itself relevant to the actual problems at hand.

Not that the evolution of United Nations peacekeeping — from patrolling clearly marked buffer zones and ceasefire lines to the far more complex, multidimensional operations of the 1990s — has been either smooth or simple. Often the expectations placed on peacekeepers have outstripped the resources given to them. Often the demands made of them have cruelly ignored the realities on the ground.

Over the decades, we have had some unmistakable successes, such as Namibia, Mozambique and El Salvador. We have also found ourselves maintaining calm in some seemingly intractable stalemates, such as Cyprus and the Middle East. In some places — Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia — we have found ourselves standing by, in impotent horror, while the most appalling crimes were committed. There the limits of peacekeeping were graphically demonstrated. We learned, the hard way, that lightly armed troops in white vehicles and blue helmets are not the solution for every conflict. Sometimes peace has to be made — or enforced — before it can be kept.

We yield to no one in our regret and our pain over those calamities: the loss of life, the wanton destruction of towns and villages, the shredding of the very fabric of humanity which, in normal times and places, allows men and women of different ethnic origin to live peacefully side by side. We will for ever measure our proudest achievements against the memory of those worst days.

But that does not mean we succumb to the fatalism of those who would rather stay at home when conflict rages and fellow human beings are suffering in a distant

land. That is the cynic's answer, and that is the coward's solution. It is not ours.

We are not here today to declare victory. We cannot claim that peacekeeping has been the answer to every conflict; still less, alas, that it has prevented the recurrence of genocide. What we can and do claim proudly is that, in the first half century of their existence, United Nations Blue Helmets have saved tens of thousands of lives.

In recent times the pendulum may appear to have swung away from the support of United Nations peacekeeping. But I have no doubt that history will see it as one of the Organization's most important and lasting contributions to international peace and security.

The mission of United Nations peacekeeping must continue. Too much remains to be done; too many innocents are dying even as we speak, for us to think of leaving the field now.

Peacekeeping's promise, after all, was never to end war. Peacekeeping is not the same as peacemaking. It can help prevent, or at least delay, recurrence of conflict. It can be used, as we have shown in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to help prevent conflict from breaking out in the first place. Above all, it gives time and space for conflict resolution: it gives peace a chance. If the chance is not taken, the peacemakers are not to blame.

Isaiah's words,

> "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more", (*The Holy Bible, Isaiah 2:4*)

will never be more than an ideal for humanity. If, in our service as United Nations peacekeepers, we can help make that ideal more true than false, more promising than distant, more able to protect the innocent than embolden the guilty, we will have done our part.

The will to peace must exist among the peoples and the parties, but the path to peace is one that we, the United Nations, can help pave. We have done so for the last 50 years, and I am confident we can continue to do so in the coming century.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Nepal, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Shah (Nepal): On this solemn occasion marking the commemoration of 50 years of United Nations peacekeeping, I should like to pay the tribute of the member States of the Asian Group to the more than 1,500 peacekeepers who have made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives in the service of the United Nations. They have displayed courage, idealism and motivation of the highest order.

Our homage is also due to the thousands of other peacekeepers who have suffered physical disability while in the service of the Organization.

On behalf of the Asian Group, I would like to express our gratitude to the 14,500 military and civilian police personnel who are currently serving the cause of peace in the 17 ongoing peacekeeping missions of the United Nations around the globe today.

It is my great honour, on behalf of the Asian Group, to welcome the presence in this Hall of the families of the first recipients of the newly instituted Dag Hammarskjöld Medal, the late Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, Commandant René de Labarrière and Count Folke Bernadotte — the martyrs of peace who have been and shall remain a source of inspiration.

It is also my honour to recognize the presence at this commemorative meeting of former Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, former Under-Secretaries-General, Assistant Secretaries-General, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Deputy Special Representatives, force commanders, chiefs of staff, chief military observers, military advisers, civilian police commissioners, Headquarters and field staff of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as well as of several former peacekeepers. To all of them, thousands of others who could not be here and those who have already left us, the Asian Group owes a debt of gratitude for a job well done.

Peacekeeping is a unique United Nations concept under which troops are deployed not for purposes of war, but to provide a foundation for peace. In its primary role in the maintenance of international peace and security, peacekeeping has been, and will remain one of the essential tools of the United Nations. Fifty years after the mandating of the first peacekeeping operation,

peacekeeping continues to be adapted to changing needs and is becoming increasingly multidimensional. We are satisfied that efforts continue to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to respond rapidly to demands for peacekeeping and to improve the overall management of peacekeeping missions.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Poland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Wyzner (Poland): It is indeed with a sense of great honour and pride that I take the floor today on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States — honour, because I am addressing the General Assembly convened on the most solemn occasion: to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping; and pride, because the idea of adopting the declaration to pay special tribute to those who have been keeping peace all over the world, at the request and on behalf of all the Members of the United Nations, originated in the Group I am representing today whose two members, Ukraine and Poland, authored the original draft declaration.

The initiative I am referring to was not put forward by mere chance. It emerged as a reflection of both the commitment of the members of the Group of Eastern European States to the ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the high measure of their commitment to the Organization's peacekeeping activities.

The members of our Group have consistently been among the leading troop contributors. Their national contingents constitute today more than 12 per cent of the total military strength of United Nations peacekeeping operations and currently serve in all but two of them. One of the members of the Group, Poland, has for some time been the biggest United Nations troop contributor.

Occasions like today's call for reflection. Let me share some with the General Assembly. It is important to realize how indispensable United Nations peacekeeping has become in the course of 50 years of its history. Our Organization's mechanism for maintaining international peace and security would have been indeed incomplete and not properly equipped had it not been for the peacekeepers' readiness to answer a call of the Security Council.

Having turned 50 and accomplished so much since its inception, United Nations peacekeeping, in order to remain as relevant and useful as it has always been, is bound to further evolve. What we are dealing with today is sometimes quite distant from the original concept of peacekeeping. Contemporary operations tend to be highly complicated multidimensional undertakings, involving not only military, but also civilian specialists, and are often carried out in cooperation with regional organizations or arrangements, humanitarian organizations and numerous other agencies. Their mandates include far more than traditional peacekeeping alone. In fact, a distinct change seems to be under way, leading to wider participation of United Nations peacekeeping in post-conflict peace-building in all its variety.

Much remains to be done to prepare the Blue Helmets to shoulder this kind of responsibility and we all, Members of the United Nations and its main bodies alike, have our part of the task to fulfil. The 50 years of United Nations peacekeeping provides us with a wealth of experience to draw from. This experience is both positive and negative. The former does not necessarily give us complete guidance for operating in today's frequently unusual circumstances; the latter, painful as it may be, should never be forgotten while preparing future operations.

In this context, let me mention one particular issue which should be kept constantly at the centre of our attention: the safety and security of United Nations peacekeeping personnel. We strongly believe that measures must be taken to prevent vicious, deliberate assaults on the soldiers sent by the United Nations to assist others in containing and resolving conflicts and to provide both military and civilian personnel with adequate protection. One of these measures should be the early entry into force and universal acceptance of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

Thanks to the years of outstanding service and its unquestioned accomplishments, United Nations peacekeeping is known to millions of people throughout the world. For many of them the very presence of soldiers wearing blue helmets generates hope and the conviction that they are not being abandoned to war and atrocities.

Three quarters of a million soldiers delegated by their respective Governments have been carrying out the mandates assigned to them by the Security Council. Fifteen hundred and eighty-one of them have made the ultimate sacrifice in our common endeavours to maintain peace and security. We bow our heads in tribute to their memory.

We also pay tribute to all their comrades-in-arms who are represented here by the group of former peacekeepers. Their service is highly appreciated. The honours and prizes they have been awarded, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988, have been richly deserved.

Let me express our special gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his unique contribution and leadership both at the helm of this Organization and earlier as the head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

In conclusion, may I assure the whole General Assembly that the members of the Group of Eastern European States will do their utmost to further develop and strengthen the United Nations peacekeeping potential, a precious instrument at the disposal of the international community in its quest for peace and security.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of the Dominican Republic, who will speak on behalf of the States of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Ms. Aguiar (Dominican Republic) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the States of Latin America and the Caribbean on such a very special occasion for the United Nations, the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of peacekeeping operations.

Over the last 50 years, the countries of our region have not remained indifferent to United Nations peacekeeping activities. We must highlight the fact that our countries are participating in 12 of the 17 current operations. Some of our members, such as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Uruguay, have been contributing staff for more than 40 years. The region I have the honour to represent has traditionally solved its differences through peaceful means. According to the Secretary-General's 1998 report, the Organization currently has six peacekeeping operations deployed in Europe, four in the Middle East, four in Africa, two in Asia and only one in Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti. Thus, I am able to state that our region has traditionally contributed more personnel than it has had to receive on its territory.

Latin America and the Caribbean attach great importance to all the processes, ranging from preventive diplomacy to post-conflict peace-building. This is shown by the fact that our participation in peacekeeping operations is not limited to sending military and police troops. Mexico and Colombia belong to the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General for Guatemala, while Argentina, Chile and Venezuela belong to the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General for Haiti.

In terms of troop contributions, there is no distinction between large and small countries. In fact, in 1995 Uruguay contributed the largest number of troops from our region. The Caribbean Community countries showed a spirit of solidarity in participating in the United Nations operations in Haiti. Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago all had a presence there. El Salvador, Ecuador and Cuba have contributed to other missions, while Brazil figured prominently in the peacekeeping operation in Angola. Bolivia and my own country have shown interest in contributing troops in the near future.

The experience of Latin America and the Caribbean in peacekeeping operations is growing daily, not only in the field but also through courses for troops and military observers that are given in the regional training centre whose headquarters is in Buenos Aires, and in other similar centres, such as the one in Montevideo. Often, these courses enjoy the participation of staff from centres of other regions.

The United Nations, as an honest and neutral broker, remains an essential factor in peacekeeping and confidence-building. To be effective, peace missions require the full consent and cooperation of the parties to the conflict and must always remain impartial and have a clear mandate. But States must support these efforts by providing qualified staff and the necessary financial resources. The United Nations can only be as effective as we, the Member States, allow it to be.

The Security Council has been discharging its mission in the process of creating peacekeeping operations. Since 1994, there have been visible indications that the Member States are working with a more harmonious approach as regards peacekeeping missions. Guidelines and parameters have been defined for the creation or extension of operations. We must also recognize that the degree of transparency has increased in the Council and that consultations with contributing countries have begun to take place. This wholesome process, which we approve of and welcome, is the outcome to a great extent of proposals originating in countries of our region. In that context, I would like to

recall the words spoken by the Permanent Representative of Chile when those consultations with troop-contributing countries were institutionalized:

> "Troop-contributing countries have the right to be heard by the Council, and this right must be recognized *de jure* and not only de facto."

Fifty years after the first deployment of Blue Helmets in the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, I would like to conclude by voicing, on behalf of Latin America and the Caribbean, sincere appreciation and homage to all the men and women who have given their lives in silent and humble service under the flag of this Organization.

The Christian holy book says,

> "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace". (*The Holy Bible, Isaiah 52:7*)

The mention of feet alludes to the vocation for service. Let us celebrate these messengers of peace.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Andorra, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra) (*interpretation from French*): The Group of Western European and other States is gratified to be able to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Since 1948, more than half a million individuals — nearly 750,000 persons — have contributed to these operations, serving the ideals of peace and progress that men and women of goodwill bequeathed us in the Charter of the United Nations, in the wake of the horrors of the Second World War.

It is fitting for us to pay tribute today to all of those guardians of peace, most of them anonymous. How many wars have been avoided thanks to their courage, how many lives saved by their sacrifices? It is to them that I speak, on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, to express our sincerest gratitude.

Allow me also to recall here, in particular, the more than 1,500 of our fellow human beings who gave their lives so that peace could prevail over war. These are human beings who epitomize love and all the best that humanity has to offer. Their ultimate sacrifice reminds us that human beings are capable of great altruism in the face of suffering and of calm when faced with the destructive passion of armed conflict, even at the risk of their own lives. This is a promising sign for the human race in the third millennium.

The Medal in memory of Dag Hammarskjöld, who himself perished in the service of the Organization, is a tribute established by the Security Council to the eternal memory of those who, within the United Nations, are engaged in the maintenance of peace. The Group of Western European and other States warmly congratulates the families of Commandant René de Labarrière, Count Folke Bernadotte and Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld on their well-deserved awarding of this medal. May the light of their good works guide us down the long road of peace!

(spoke in Spanish)

During these 50 years of peacekeeping operations, the member States of the Group of Western European and other States, along with many other Member States of the United Nations, have made available men and women, as well as important resources, to serve these operations.

(spoke in English)

In a world that has to deal every day with the conflicts revived by the end of the cold war, it is important that these operations continue and progress. It is also essential that people who participate directly in these operations be guaranteed their safety in the field. The agents of peace who received the Nobel Prize in 1988 must find respect everywhere, for without them, war and conflict become savagery.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of the United States, speaking on behalf of the host country.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): Fifty years ago, the United Nations committed a handful of military observers to the cause of peace in what would become the first United Nations peacekeeping operation. In the spring of 1948, after two world wars and centuries of conflict, the world saw soldiers used in the service of peace. Together with their civilian colleagues, these soldiers opened a new chapter in international affairs. In these 50 years, our peacekeepers have continued to

provide peace to the many people suffering the ravages of war and violence.

For more than five decades, the United Nations has taken on the difficult challenges to peace throughout the world. During this time, our peacekeepers have prevented wars, saved lives and inspired hope across the globe. It is a noble record, unparalleled in history, and a tribute to those who have so unselfishly served.

It is fitting, at this time, that we remember our peacekeepers — men and women, young and old, military and civilian — who have sacrificed their lives in the service of peace. Dag Hammarskjöld wrote that one should "seek the road which makes death a fulfilment". United Nations peacekeepers have sought the right road, and their efforts and sacrifices have not been in vain, for they have fallen so that others may live in peace. The true memorial to their sacrifice is the peace they helped create, the lives they helped preserve, and the promise they helped sustain in order to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

As we commemorate the achievements of 50 years of peacekeeping under the colours of the United Nations, let us not forget the continuing missions and daily sacrifices of our peacekeepers in the field today. May they prevail and overcome the many obstacles they face. May their families, their nations, and the United Nations support them as they serve far from home and country. Daily they are quietly pursuing peace, and for that we thank them.

Our commemoration must not end today, for there is much unfinished work. Let us honour our fallen peacekeepers with deeds, not words. Let us continue, both here and in the field, with our efforts to improve peacekeeping. We can do this, and must do this. Let us recommit ourselves today, as our peacekeepers have, to the service of peace.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the representative of South Africa, who will speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Mr. Vermeulen (South Africa): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement at this commemorative meeting marking the fiftieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping. On this special occasion, the Non-Aligned Movement wishes to pay tribute to all the men and women who have, over the past 50 years, served as peacekeepers around the world under the United Nations flag. We honour the memory of all those among them who have sacrificed their lives in the pursuit of peace. We add our voice in welcoming the establishment of the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal as a tribute to those who have made the highest sacrifice while serving in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

While the Non-Aligned Movement fully recognizes the importance of United Nations peacekeeping efforts, there is a need for a comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping. This matter received prominent attention at the Non-Aligned Movement summit meeting which took place in Durban, South Africa, only last month.

The Non-Aligned Movement affirms its commitment and willingness to provide full support to United Nations peacekeepers to ensure that they are able to fulfil the tasks entrusted to them. Yet when we look back at 50 years of United Nations peacekeeping, let us remind ourselves that durable peace is ultimately dependent on the elimination of all facets of the causes of conflict.

Peacekeeping is a support tool in the maintenance of international peace and security, which is a responsibility that must be shared by all of us. In this regard, the Non-Aligned Movement would once more like to stress the need for regular and institutionalized consultations between troop-contributing countries and the Security Council, because this is an important step in confidence-building, transparency and partnership.

Contemporary peacekeeping is increasingly multidimensional and requires a more effective approach to coordinating the core military tasks with humanitarian assistance. As the Non-Aligned Movement has stated in the past, dealing with challenges posed by this multidimensional nature of peacekeeping will still require of us the ability to differentiate between peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance.

This differentiation also needs to be extended to cover civilian policing, whose role is increasingly crucial. I would like to recall the decision of the Non-Aligned Movement on this matter highlighting the urgency of developing agreed guidelines on the principles governing the role of civilian police personnel in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Several Non-Aligned Movement member countries are among the largest and most consistent contributors of troops to United Nations peacekeeping. On this occasion, the Non-Aligned Movement wishes to underscore the

importance of resolving the question of delays in the reimbursement of troop costs and contingent-owned equipment leases, which have caused hardship to all troop- and equipment-contributing countries.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Assembly of the non-aligned countries' commitment to peacekeeping and to assure it that the Movement will continue playing a constructive role to enhance United Nations peacekeeping through the United Nations Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, which is the competent forum with the mandate to comprehensively review the whole question of peacekeeping in all its aspects.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Nigeria, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States and as Chairman of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

Mr. Gambari (Nigeria): It is a happy coincidence that the General Assembly, at this fifty-third session, will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that today it is commemorating 50 years of United Nations peacekeeping. There can be no peace without fundamental freedoms, and human rights cannot be exercised in an atmosphere of national chaos and conflict. Perhaps more than others, we Africans appreciate this linkage, especially in view of our recent history of struggle against colonialism and apartheid and the unfortunate reality of persistent conflicts in our continent. For this reason, we in Africa, as part of the international community, are strongly committed to both the promotion of human rights and the preservation of world peace and security.

Today's commemoration of 50 years of United Nations peacekeeping operations is an opportunity for both celebration and reflection. As we assemble here, men and women in uniform, wearing the blue helmets of the United Nations, are out in the field, putting themselves at risk in the service of international peace and security. We salute their courage and their commitment. We also recognize that when States Member of the United Nations deploy their peacekeepers to conflict situations, this is a reaffirmation of their full commitment to the promotion of international peace and security. In ascribing the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace to the Security Council, the Charter of the United Nations also demands that its Members establish and maintain the very essence of the very peace that Governments seek to establish: the promotion and protection of the political, economic, cultural and social rights of the individual, the community and society as a whole.

African States have been major beneficiaries of United Nations peacekeeping, but it must also be remembered that African States have made significant contributions to international peacekeeping efforts. We have sent troops, observers and civilian police, some of whom have made the ultimate sacrifice. We have also provided force commanders for some of the United Nations peacekeeping operations — some of whom are here with us today — and we have for the most part paid our assessed contributions for peacekeeping.

Moreover, since 1993, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has played an increasing role in the resolution of conflict in our continent. The OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution is Africa's response to the United Nations Agenda for Peace. It is a clear acceptance on the part of the OAU member States of their responsibility to be proactive and supportive of the maintenance of international peace and security, especially in their continent.

A few years ago, the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity agreed, within the context of their cooperative efforts, that there was an urgent need to enhance cooperation in the area of conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution. They agreed, *inter alia*, that, first, the interrelationship between human rights, democracy, security, stability and development in Africa necessitated effective cooperative action between them. The United Nations Agenda for Peace has provided both organizations with the opportunity to render even greater service in a manner consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charters of both the United Nations and the OAU.

Secondly, they agreed that the OAU could play a constructive role in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in Africa, but that the United Nations should assist the OAU to establish and strengthen those structures and procedures which would enhance its capabilities to settle disputes and prevent conflicts. This was in fact endorsed by the Security Council when it discussed the situation in Africa last year, and again as recently as last month.

Finally, we believe that the cooperation in the area of international peacekeeping between the United Nations and the OAU should be further strengthened and

enhanced for the benefit of both Africa and the world. While we insist — and we will continue to insist — on the Charter provision that it is the Security Council which has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security everywhere, there are in fact instances when the OAU has a comparative advantage in helping prevent, manage and resolve conflicts in our continent. For instance, the OAU members are closer to conflict situations in the continent, possess greater knowledge of the causes of those conflicts and often demonstrate greater political will to solve their own problems. In addition, OAU and subregional peacekeeping efforts are cheaper than those of the United Nations. Moreover, subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community have demonstrated the will and the capacity to respond to the challenges of peacekeeping and peacemaking in our continent. Nonetheless, regional and subregional organizations require logistic and financial support from the international community in order to be effective partners with the United Nations so as to meet the complex and growing challenges of peacekeeping in the post-cold-war era.

Speaking now in my capacity as Chairman of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution (A/53/L.5) that is before the General Assembly, the annex to which contains the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of United Nations Peacekeeping.

At a time when peacekeeping faces great challenges and plays a crucial role in the maintenance of international peace and security, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations believes that it is most fitting that we should mark the fiftieth anniversary of peacekeeping through the adoption of a formal declaration.

Through the Declaration before the Assembly, which was initiated by Ukraine but drafted and supported by the entire Special Committee, the General Assembly would pay tribute to the hundreds of thousands of men and women who have, in the past 50 years, served under the United Nations flag in almost 50 operations around the world.

We would also honour the memory of more than 1,500 peacekeepers who have laid down their lives in the cause of peace, and in this regard, would welcome very warmly the establishment by the Security Council of the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal.

Above all, we would reaffirm our commitment to provide full support to the peacekeepers of the United Nations, to ensure that they can successfully fulfil the tasks entrusted to them by Members of our Organization.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We will now proceed to a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.5, entitled "Fiftieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping".

Before we do so, allow me to respectfully welcome Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, an eminent Latin American who served from 1982 to 1991 as Secretary-General.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.5?

Draft resolution A/53/L.5 was adopted (resolution 53/2).

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): This concludes the commemorative meeting marking the fiftieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.